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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7991  
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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0813  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [BG](#)  
SUBJECT: REFORM ACTIONS SPLITS POLITICAL PARTIES

REF: DHAKA 0984

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Elizabeth Gourlay; reason  
1.4(d)

11. (SBU) Summary: This week, reformers within the BNP and the AL announced reform efforts intended to make the political parties internal operations more democratic and as a consequence sideline current leaders. The proposals foreshadow a possible split in each of the parties. Leaders within the Jatiya Party and the LDP announced senior leadership changes. End Summary

BNP SECGEN ANNOUNCES DEMOCRATIC REFORMS; POSSIBLE BNP SPLIT?  
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12. (SBU) On June 25, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Secretary General Bhuiyan announced a package of 15 reform

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proposals to amend the party's governing rules, which he claimed would democratize the party. Among the reforms is a bar against the chair from simultaneously being the head of government and of the party. The proposals would also limit the incumbent of the position of party chair and/or Prime Minister to a total of two terms. These conditions disqualify current chair Khaleda Zia from further terms as party chair or Prime Minister.

13. (SBU) According to the media, Zia issued a statement welcoming "any reform proposals" but underlined the need to have any reforms approved by a party council meeting. BNP reformers told us that they see a politically weakened Zia, more concerned with corruption charges against her sons and other relatives and restricted by the government from contacting and meeting potential allies, but discounted a possibility of a party split. In response to the reform proposals, however, Zia announced plans to develop alternative proposals.

AWAMI LEAGUE ANNOUNCES FUTURE REFORMS  
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14. (SBU) Awami League reformers said they would announce reforms, similar to the ones announced by BNP, aimed to curb powers of the party chief and separate the ruling party from the government. AL Chair Sheikh Hasina criticized the reform proposals by criticizing the government for permitting the BNP to discuss political reform proposals in violation of the ban on political activities.

ERSHAD'S WIFE CLAIMS JATIYA PARTY; LDP SPLITS

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15. (SBU) Raushan Ershad, estranged wife of Jatiya Party chairman and former military dictator H.M. Ershad, on June 26, announced a 13-point proposal to reform the party, proclaimed herself as the acting party chief and offered to make Ershad the "Chief Advisor." She also claimed to have replaced Secretary General Howlader with Golam Moshi. Anticipating Raushan,s rebellion, Ershad had earlier threatened to expel her from the party and announced a committee to develop a reform proposal.

16. (SBU) On the same day, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Executive Chairman Oli Ahmed, proclaimed himself the LDP President claiming that LDP President Badruddoza Chowdhury and LDP Secretary General Major (Retired) Abdul Mannan had left the LDP. On June 27, media reported that B. Chowdhury and Abdul Mannan dissolved the LDP presidium and announced a new presidium, excluding Oli Ahmed.

Comment  
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17. (C) Comment: Some politicians, like LDP's Oli Ahmed and Reshaun Ershad, have made the same calculation we have: with the increased probability that the military-supported government could consist of a coalition of a number of parties, any party no matter how small could be part of the next government. Look for more splits and more parties.  
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